

away a year ago on October 8, 2003, at 45 years of age.

A resident of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Jeannette was recognized nationally for her advocacy on childhood autism. She was a homemaker and the mother of an autistic son, Christopher, whom I got to know over the past few years.

Jeannette traveled the nation to help create programs to assist autistic children and their parents. To obtain more funding for autism programs across our home state of Pennsylvania, Jeannette spent many hours visiting members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly and Senate.

Her advocacy helped lead to undergraduate programs for the autistic at Franklin and Marshall College, Millersville University, and The Pennsylvania State University. In addition, Jeannette's valuable work created an in-home autism-help program at Rutgers University.

I am saddened that a year ago this week, we lost Jeannette after an illness of several months. Despite her condition, she lobbied on behalf of the autistic community until her untimely passing.

Jeannette is one of Pennsylvania's great heroes, who while taking care of a son and daughter, used her voice and powers of persuasion to create new hope for children with autism and their families. While we continue to mourn her passing, today I rise to celebrate the life and accomplishments of Jeannette M. Davis.

THE UNIVERSAL NATIONAL SERVICE ACT OF 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN KLINE

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 5, 2004

Mr. KLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to H.R. 163 and urge my colleagues to overwhelmingly reject not only this election year "scare tactic" but the increasingly archaic policy of universal conscription.

Since the founding of our nation over two hundred years ago, the U.S. military has reluctantly used conscription to rapidly fill the ranks of an often undermanned and under funded military force in the face of grave national threats. Today, we live in a nation united under a single representative government that has faced and defeated the global threats of fascism and communism. A vital component of these victories was the evolution of the U.S. military from a garrison force, reinforced by conscripts in times of national emergency, to the present-day, all-volunteer military which now ably defends our nation from the deadly violence of international terrorism.

Like a large portion of our population, I am old enough to recall America's last attempt at conscription. More significantly, as a junior officer in the Marine Corps near the end of the Vietnam conflict, I witnessed first-hand many of the unfortunate repercussions of the military draft policy—the migration of a drug culture into the ranks, race riots, and the lack of unit camaraderie that leads to mission success.

I am proud to say that when I finished my 25-year career in the Marine Corps, those problems had completely disappeared or been

reduced to statistical insignificance. Today's all-volunteer military, forged in the tragic "lessons learned" of Vietnam, has repeatedly demonstrated its professionalism and ability to defend America's national interests. The men and women of this well-educated and well-trained force serve our nation because they choose to do so. Today, we honor their service and ensure their continued success by voting to maintain the best-equipped, best-trained, and all-volunteer, Armed Forces.

THE GUARD AND RESERVE EDUCATION AND TRAINING (GREAT) ACT OF 2004

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 6, 2004

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce today the Guard and Reserve Education and Training Act of 2004. GREAT would bring VA educational assistance opportunities for Guard and Reserve members—often referred to as the Selected Reserve—more in line with those of their active duty counterparts. In the post-9/11 environment, active duty and Guard/Reserve members often serve side-by-side as part of our Total Force concept. I believe it's an issue the Veterans' Affairs and Armed Services Committee can work on together because the Department of Veterans Affairs administers the program determining eligibility and pays educational assistance allowances.

This year America celebrates the 60th Anniversary of the original World War II GI Bill. Due to the GI Bill, college enrollment grew dramatically. In 1947, GI Bill enrollees accounted for almost half of the total college population. In the decade following World War II, more than 2 million eligible men and women attended college using GI Bill educational benefits. The result was an American workforce enriched by 450,000 engineers, 238,000 teachers, 91,000 scientists, 67,000 doctors, 22,000 dentists and another million college-educated men and women. Indeed, the GI Bill is arguably our most successful program ever due to its profound effect on our economy and our workforce.

In 1985, under the visionary leadership of our former Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman, G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery, Congress designed the modern version of the GI Bill, fittingly now called the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB). In Public Law 107-103, the Veterans Education and Benefits Expansion Act of 2001, Congress significantly increased MGIB purchasing power for veterans and servicemembers. I was privileged to author this legislation which increased the MGIB basic benefit from \$672 to \$800 per month in January 2002, to \$900 in October 2002 and to \$985 in October 2003—a 46 percent increase. These increases are the largest in the MGIB's remarkable history. With the annual cost of living increase for fiscal year 2005, the MGIB now pays \$1,004 per month.

GREAT would continue the progression of improvements to the MGIB by providing a greater benefit to our Guard and Reserve members.

First, this legislation would increase the VA monthly educational assistance allowance rate

for Guard/Reserve members from \$288 to \$400. When Congress first created the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB)-Selected Reserve educational assistance program in 1985, it established the monthly benefit level at about 47 percent of the active duty rate. However, the education benefit rate for Selected Reservists has lagged significantly behind the original 47 percent figure. Today, the \$288 per month that members of the Selected Reserve receive under chapter 1606 of title 10, United States Code, is only about 28 percent of the \$1,004 per month that regular active-duty servicemembers receive under chapter 30 of title 38, United States Code. My proposed increase to \$400 per month would be a first step to bring the Selected Reserve education benefit closer to the amount Congress envisioned when it initially created the MGIB.

Second, GREAT would establish a new, higher benefit for Guard and Reserve members who have accumulated 180 days within a 5-year period of active duty service in a contingency operation since September 11, 2001. This new benefit would be equal to the benefit for servicemembers who enlist for 2 years of active duty and 4 years of Reserve duty—\$816 per month. These Reservists and Guards members would not incur a \$1,200 pay reduction to be eligible for the new benefit. In my view, the current pay reduction simply represents a kind of tax. The House did not originally contemplate such a pay reduction for either active duty or Selected Reserve members. In fact, the 1999 report of the bipartisan Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance recommended that Congress repeal the \$1,200 pay reduction.

Third, to establish greater equity in the Selected Reserve and active duty educational assistance programs, my bill would allow beneficiaries to use entitlement during a 14-year period that would begin on the date of their last day of active duty, the same as the policy currently in effect for active duty servicemembers. This new, 14-year delimiting date would be available to members of the Selected Reserve on or after September 30, 2004. Currently, Selected Reserve members may use VA educational assistance benefits under the MGIB only while still serving in the Reserves.

Finally, GREAT would give service branch secretaries the discretionary authority to allow Selected Reserve members to transfer any unused VA educational entitlement to dependents if the member has completed at least 20 years in the Reserves. Many Reservists are married and have families. My bill would furnish them an additional tool to finance a child or spouse's education or training to compete in the workforce. The Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance also made this recommendation.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation. The role of Guard and Reserve members in our national defense has changed dramatically under the Total Force concept. Guard and Reserve members can be mobilized for up to 2 years. They often experience some of the same types of issues in transitioning from military to civilian life as do their active duty counterparts. My bill would help facilitate that transition through increased training opportunities in a highly competitive civilian economy. Further, my bill fundamentally acknowledges